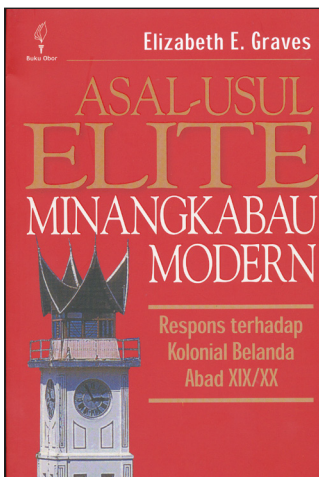


anyone interested in history, especially that of the missionary activities in Indonesia and the cultural history of the Netherlands East Indies.

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Quite early, the Minangkabau in West Sumatra adopted the European-style educational system the Dutch Colonial Government had introduced. Although the Minangkabau people adhere to Islam, they responded positively to secular education. The book *Asal-usul elite Minangkabau Modern* provides an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon. It looks at various local cultural elements that may have contributed to the wide acceptance of the European secular education system in Minangkabau and the

socio-cultural impacts it caused during the second half of the nineteenth up to the first half of the twentieth century.

This book is an Indonesian translation of Graves' *The Minangkabau response to Dutch colonial rule in the nineteenth century* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1981), which was the published version of her Ph.D. thesis entitled "The ever-victorious buffalo; How the Minangkabau of Indonesia solved their 'colonial question'" (University of Wisconsin, 1971). Indonesian readers had to wait for long time, three decades, before they were enabled to read the translation of this book. Therefore, the credit goes to the translators, the principal editor, and the publisher for this Indonesian version so it can be read by a wider Indonesian audience.

Compared with its two English editions, the title of the Indonesian translation quickly reveals the gist of the book, which is the emergence of the modern Minangkabau elite as a result of the introduction of secular education

by the Dutch in West Sumatra after 1825.

Graves sets up her analysis in Chapter 1 by first giving a description of the beautiful Minangkabau landscape and its inimitable socio-cultural system. In this chapter, entitled “*Alam Minangkabau dan masyarakat tradisional*” (The Minangkabau world and its traditional village society) (pp. 1-34), Graves discusses two topics: the indigenous Minangkabau political unit called the *nagari* and the matrilineal system that determines Minangkabau kinship which its turn resolves issues of property inheritance, clan (*suku*) organization under *penghulu* leadership (male village leaders), and father-children relations. The distinctive Minangkabau village confederacy called *nagari* is described in further detail in Chapter 2: “*Nagari dan dunia kehidupannya*” (The village and the world beyond) (pp. 35-60). As reflected in the chapter’s title, it describes the *nagari* as an autonomous Minangkabau indigenous geopolitical system and as an important element in social life. In the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, there were hundreds of *nagari* in Minangkabau. These “small republics”, which each were their own exclusive entity in terms of geography, customs, and politics, formed a kind of quasi-federation that was highly respectful of the authority of the Pagaruyung Court in the hinterlands. This chapter also discusses the Minangkabau people’s distinctive custom of *merantau* (out-migration) which not only served to introduce foreign ideologies and new ideas into Minangkabau, but also functioned as a relief valve to help reduce social pressure and conflict in the homeland. Furthermore, this chapter also discusses the emergence of Islamic institutions and their development. These institutions initially only influenced the socio-cultural environment of the Minangkabau people in the western coastal region (*rantau barat*), but eventually they brought Islamization to the highlands (*darek*) leading to the emergence of a puritan movement which ignited the bloody conflict known as the Padri War (1803-1837).

After the Dutch decided to involve themselves in the Padri War in 1821 and then proceeded to win it, they subsequently penetrated Minangkabau’s indigenous political system and formed a centralized government in West Sumatra that was hierarchical and centralistic in character. The Dutch takeover of the Minangkabau’s traditional social and political system and the way the indigenous population reacted to it are discussed in Chapter 3, entitled “*Format politik baru; Pemerintahan sentralistik dan status-quo*” (A new political format; Centralized rule and a status quo) (pp. 61-101). Under this Dutch-made administrative system, the Governor of West Sumatra extended his power to the level of the *nagari*. The natives (*pribumi*) only occupied the two lowest layers of this new administration: the *nagari* head (*wali nagari*) and the *laras* head (*tuanku lareh* or *larashoofd* in Dutch). The Dutch occupied higher positions: the controller (*controlir*, or *controleur* in Dutch), the assistant resident (in Dutch: *assistent resident*), the resident, and the governor. Two other positions were open to natives in this new administrative system, *jaksa* (public prosecutor and attending investigator) and *demang* (post-1914 the title for a district chief). The Minangkabau people reacted against this type

of centralized political system because they had long been accustomed to live in an egalitarian atmosphere under the traditional political system of the “*nagari* republics”.

The economic motives behind the Dutch designed reorganization of Minangkabau’s political system are discussed in Chapter 4, entitled “Reorganisasi ekonomi; Pajak dan sistem tanaman kopi” (Economic reorganization; Tax and coffee plant system) (pp. 102-148). In this chapter, the author describes the forced implementation of a tax system and the obligatory planting of coffee, the main export commodity during that era, with no regard for the socio-cultural, political, educational, or economic effects this might have. One of the most significant effects of the Dutch political and economic penetration was the emergence of secular schools that challenged the traditional Islamic-based educational system of the *surau*. This phenomenon is discussed in Chapter 5, entitled “Pendidikan sekuler 1840-1860-an; Era inisiatif lokal” (Secular education in the 1840s to the 1860s; The era of local initiative) (pp. 149-209). Graves describes the emergence of secular schools in the Minangkabau and the public’s responses to it. Unexpectedly, the Minangkabau people responded positively to the presence of these secular schools in their land, as evidenced by the emergence of what is called the *nagari* schools (*sekolah nagari*), elementary schools that were often funded by the natives themselves. Such schools mainly sprung up in important villages in the inland coffee-producing centers like Rao, Panti, Lubuk Sikaping, Puar Datar, Batusangkar, Bukittinggi, Sijunjung and Muara Labuh – to name just a few.

Because the Minangkabau people were very enthusiastic about the secular education system, the Dutch colonial government felt obliged to reform it in order to improve its quality. However, it seems that this action was also motivated by the Dutch colonial government’s fear that their colonized subjects might just become too clever and advanced, which might jeopardize Dutch power and authority in the colony. Graves describes the reorganization of the educational system in Chapter 6, entitled “Reorganisasi pendidikan tahun 1870-an; Sekolah dasar pemerintah dan sekolah lanjutan” (Educational reorganization in the 1870s; The government elementary schools and Advanced education) (pp. 210-247). Beginning in 1870, the Dutch started to control the curriculum of the *nagari* schools which they labeled “wild school” (*sekolah liar*) and established government primary and secondary schools. By 1880 there were no less than 27 government primary schools spread throughout West Sumatra, from Rao in the north to Balai Selasa in the south. This reorganization was coupled with other improvements to the organizational structure of government institutions, particularly those related to education.

The consequence of this secular education system was the emergence of a young generation of Minangkabau people who could read *huruf Walanda* (literally, Dutch letters, which means Latin script), who became the first members of the modern Minangkabau elite. In Chapter 7, entitled “Genealogi elite baru; Suatu studi kasus” (The genealogy of the new elite; A case study)

(pp. 248-270) the author traces the history of these new Minangkabau elites by examining the genealogy of the families who once occupied important positions in the Dutch colonial government's bureaucracy and who became successful professionals in the private sector in the first half of the twentieth century. The main focus of Graves' field research was Koto Gadang, the Minangkabau *nagari* that was the first to absorb the spirit of European progressiveness (*kemajuan Barat*) because its people cooperated with the Dutch from the beginning, and who had responded highly positively to the secular education system the Dutch introduced. This small village, which is situated close to the Sianok Canyon of Bukittinggi, consistently produced scores of doctors, engineers, lawyers, and other academics since the late 1890s thanks to the secular education system introduced by the Dutch. Their matrilineal family even sent Koto Gadang youth to higher-level schools in Java, and even to the Netherlands.

Chapter 8, "Epilog; Minangkabau dalam abad ke-20" (Epilogue; Minangkabau in the twentieth century) (pp. 271-281), discusses the critical reactions of the new Minangkabau elites towards the Dutch colonial government, especially their education policies for the natives. By the turn of the twentieth century, along with the increasing number of new Minangkabau elites who worked in the interior administration (*binnenlandsch bestuur*), the colonial government was pressed to expand the number of government schools in Minangkabau. The government was also urged to resume and even expand Dutch language teaching, which temporarily had been discontinued. However, simultaneously, a boomerang effect of this secular education began to be felt. Critical native intellectuals who were politically opposed to the Dutch colonial regime emerged. Worried that the natives were getting smarter, the Dutch colonial government continued to tighten the administration of schools and their curriculum at various levels.

Apparently, these new Minangkabau elites did not solely use the knowledge they obtained from their secular education to work as an employee (*ambtenaar*) in the colonial government administration. Many of them found employment in the private sector and many became strong entrepreneurs. According to Graves, the "Minangkabau people aptly caught the new and secular colonial rules according to their own understanding; they took what they needed and adjusted that to their particular purposes" (p. 280).

Graves' study, which combines an examination of colonial archival data and field research in West Sumatra, found that the collapse of the traditional power of the middle class due to natural rotation did not occur in the Minangkabau traditional bureaucracy, mainly because of Dutch intervention in Minangkabau society. Traditionally, middle-class mobility was impossible. The new educated elites met with obstructions in their own traditional political realm. Fortunately, most of them found a place in the Dutch colonial administration. Others engaged in private sectors or joined the political movements that struggled to liberate their motherland from the Dutch colonizers and some of them became leading statesmen in the newborn

nation-state called Indonesia (including Haji Agus Salim, Muhammad Hatta, Sutan Sjahrir, Muhammad Natsir, Rasuna Said) – they may be seen as historical examples of awe-inspiring story of the Minangkabau ethnic group.

This book is interesting. However, I feel that, unlike Jeffrey Hadler's recent studies on the Minangkabau (2008), Graves seems to have used fewer indigenous resources, whether in the form of manuscripts, books, schoolbooks, memoirs, or other sources. As I described in one of my publications (Suryadi 2006), the Minangkabau have been most critical of the Dutch secular education system even though they accepted it. Many narratives can be found in several of the indigenous resources mentioned above that suggest that the Minangkabau people appreciated European secular education. The growth of many local publishers in West Sumatra, who published books using Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script in the first half of the twentieth century, and the emergence of native-initiated schools like *Adabiah* in Padang and *Sumatra Tawallib* in Padang Panjang, which combined Islamic and European subjects in their curricula are, in my mind, manifestations of reactions against the spread of the secular educational system into Muslim Minangkabau society. Until about the 1930s, as noted by the Minangkabau intellectual Marah Sutan, many Minangkabau people still believe that people who can write Latin script, "script of the infidels", will receive punishment in the Hereafter and that angels will cut off their fingers. Despite this minor criticism, this book is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to the study of the history of ethnic cultural transformation in Asia, in this case the Minangkabau, the largest matrilineal ethnic group in our contemporary world, which is more and more dominated by patrilineal societies.

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